

The Business Connector

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Networking 101

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Some people are master networkers. They seem to effortlessly establish, develop and maintain a framework of individuals comprised of family, friends, co-workers, business colleagues and even competitors.

From this interpersonal core, Masters are effectively able to both provide and obtain opportunities, information, support and energy as well as additional contacts. This generally results in new and exciting career opportunities, great clients, and interesting friends and colleagues at every turn. In short, their networks are highly productive and efficient.

Meanwhile, the rest of us seem to be mere novice networkers. We know people – in fact, we are acquainted with some of the same individuals that Masters interact with. Despite this, there is little, if any, flow of opportunities, information, support, energy or additional contacts coming from our network.

On occasion our network is able to provide us opportunities, information and support. And on occasion we are able to do the same in return. However, even when these occasions occur they seem more like mere coincidence rather than results of a plan or design. Generally, our networks bear little fruit and when they do they require much effort.

Why is there difference between Masters and Novices? The Masters are not necessarily harder working than the Novices. Usually the opposite is true. Masters use their networks to work smarter, not harder.

Masters are not necessarily any more educated than Novices. High school dropouts can be great networkers while a Ph.D. may not.

And it has nothing to do with social status, appearance or luck. The difference is the manner and approach in which Masters interact with their networks.

Master networkers strive to develop a mutual knowing, liking and trusting of one another.

Masters know that they need to be more than simply acquainted with their network. Master networkers strive to develop a mutual knowing, liking and trusting of one another.

Masters are aware – at least on some level of consciousness – that these three elements are the key to forging a powerful and productive relationship. If we were to ask them about these elements, although the terminology might vary, this would be their message.

Know: A relationship can neither be powerful nor productive until, at a bare minimum, we know someone. As this element is defined as being acquainted or familiar with someone, a mere introduction does not constitute knowing.

Knowing is being able to recognize one another, either by sight or over the telephone. In addition, knowing is being comfortable or familiar enough to be able to converse with one another – even if only about the weather. Finally, knowing is being generally informed about one another.

Like: True networking is about individuals working together for their mutual benefit. As human nature would have it, we are not drawn to benefit people we dislike. We reserve the benefits we offer for people that we are fond of.

To create this element, one must genuinely and truly care about the individuals with whom they network. In short, we need to have a stake in the well being of our network.

This means being committed to and excited by the successes of those with whom we network. Analogous to taking an interest in success, we must also share in the pain of the failures of those with whom we network. And in return, we can and should expect to receive the same devotion.

Trust: The foundation upon which a powerful and productive relationship exists is trust. To create and maintain this with our networks, we must develop in their minds a firm confidence in our virtue and abilities.

As such, to create and maintain trust, we must continually reinforce their faith in our:

1. *Honesty of Character:* We will do the things that we have pledged to do; and,
2. *Reliability of Product or Service:* We will not only do it, but we will do it well.

Thus, moving from being a mere novice to a master networker is not rooted in the number of people we meet. It is, however, grounded in getting the people we do meet – whether that number is large or small – to get to know, like, and trust us.